IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for monitoring browsing activity of a visitor to a Web site, comprising:

loading a client program into an operating environment of a client machine of a visitor to a Web site;

artificially incrementing a reference count associated with the client program to maintain persistence of the client program in the operating environment during browsing by the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site;

monitoring client browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages with the client program; ~~and~~

uploading an indication of the browsing activity of the visitor over a network for processing; and

decrementing the reference count upon a Web pages change for automatic unloading of the client program from the operating environment of the client machine.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

5. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the client program comprises an Active X control.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the reference count is incremented to a value greater than one.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 6, further comprising:

decrementing the reference count to zero upon a specified event; and

automatically unloading the client program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

8. (Currently Amended) A client-side program for monitoring the browsing activity of a visitor to a Web site, comprising:

a medium; and

logic encoded on the medium, the logic operable to run in an operating environment of a client machine of a visitor to a Web site, artificially increment a reference count associated with the program to maintain persistence of the program during browsing activity of the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site, monitor browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages, ~~pages and~~ upload an indication of the browsing activity over a network for processing, and decrement the reference count upon a Web pages change for automatic unloading of the program from the operating environment of the client machine.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Original) The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the logic comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

11. (Original) The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the logic comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

12. (Original) The client-side program of Claim 8, wherein the program comprises an Active X control.

13. (Original) The client-side program of Claim 8, the logic operable to increment the reference count to a value greater than one.

14. (Original) The client-side program of Claim 13, the logic further operable to decrement the reference count to zero upon a specified event and automatically unload the program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

15. (Currently Amended) A monitoring program for monitoring the activity of a visitor to a Web site from a client machine of the visitor, comprising:

means for artificially incrementing a reference count associated with the monitoring program to maintain persistence of the monitoring program in an operating environment of the client machine during browsing activity of the visitor across a plurality of Web pages of the Web site;

means for monitoring browsing activity of the visitor across the Web pages with the monitoring program; ~~and~~

means for uploading an indication of the browsing activity over a network for processing; and

means for decrementing the reference count upon a Web pages change for automatic unloading of the monitoring program from the operating environment of the client machine.

16. (Original) The monitoring program of Claim 15, further comprising.

17. (Original) The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises a self-decrementing object and the reference count is a reference count for the self-decrementing object.

18. (Original) The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises a component object model (COM) object and the reference count is a reference count for the COM object.

19. (Original) The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the monitoring program comprises an Active X control.

20. (Original) The monitoring program of Claim 15, wherein the reference count is incremented to a value greater than one.

21. (Original) The monitoring program of Claim 15, further comprising:

means for decrementing the reference count to zero upon a specified event; and

means for automatically unloading the monitoring program from the operating environment of the client machine upon a zero reference count.

22. (Currently Amended) A method for controlling the persistence of a component object model (COM) object downloaded over the Internet and loaded into an operating environment of a client machine, comprising:

artificially incrementing an internal reference count of the COM object to a value greater than one to maintain persistence of the COM object in an operating environment of the client machine during browsing activity across a plurality of Web pages; and

decrementing the internal reference count to zero upon a ~~specified event~~ Web pages change for automatic unloading of the COM object from the operating environment of the client machine.

23. (Original) The method of Claim 22, wherein the persistence of the COM object in the operating environment is maintained across a plurality of Web sites.

24. (Original) The method of Claim 22, wherein at least one of the Web pages is associated with a first Web site and at least one of the Web pages is associated with a second Web site distinct from the first Web site.